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ABSTRACT

This comparative study evaluates the effects of Boys and Girls Clubs and related SMART Moves drug prevention programs on children and adolescents living in public housing and on the quality of life in public housing. The study involves 15 public housing developments in a representative sample of American cities and focuses on alcohol and other drug use, delinquency, and Boys Clubs and Girls Clubs, which included the SMART Moves drug abuse prevention program; another five were served by traditional Boys and Girls Clubs; and the remaining five sites had no Boys and Girls Clubs. Analysis of the data indicates that the clubs exert a positive and palpable influence on the human and physical environment. Youth with access to the clubs are more involved in health and constructive activity. Adult residents also are positively affected by the clubs. For youth and adults alike, the presence of Boys Clubs and Girls Clubs is associated with an overall reduction in drug and alcohol use, drug trafficking, and other related criminal activities. The presence of crack cocaine is lowest at sites that include the SMART Moves program. Finally, the presence of the clubs appears to boost morale generally and encourages residents to organize and improve their communities. Six graphs are appended. (JB)

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Final Research Report

The Effects of Boys & Girls Clubs on Alcohol and Other Drug Use and Related Problems in Public Housing

A Demonstration Study
Sponsored by the:

Office of Substance Abuse Prevention

Conducted Under the Auspices of:

Boys & Girls Clubs of America
771 First Avenue
New York, New York 10017

March, 1991

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Findings from a Study of Boys & Girls Clubs in Public Housing

Purpose and Design

This comparative study evaluated the effects of Boys & Girls Clubs on children and adolescents living in public housing and on the overall quality of life in public housing. Focused on alcohol and other drug use, delinquency and vandalism, the study involved 15 public housing developments in a representative sample of American cities.

Beginning in September of 1987 and spanning three years, the study's external evaluation team compared rates of alcohol and other drug use and related problems among three groups of youth living in public housing. Youth in the first group did not have access to Boys & Girls Clubs; youth in the second group had access to newly established Clubs with a core program and a comprehensive alcohol and other drug prevention program known as SMART Moves; and youth in the third group had access to older, existing Clubs with a core program that may have included alcohol and other drug prevention programs other than SMART Moves.

Rationale

Established survey research methods, including interviewing methods and ethnographic research procedures, argue that the sources of data, rather than the data collectors, assess and quantify the nature of the target problem. For purposes of the present evaluation, those sources of information were key referents within each target Boys & Girls Club or control, and the surrounding environs.

To evaluate the five Boys & Girls Clubs initiated through OSAP funding, each of the Clubs with SMART Moves was assigned to two control sites: one public housing site with a Boys & Girls Club without SMART Moves and one public housing site without a Boys & Girls Club. These control sites were geographically and demographically matched with the Clubs offering SMART Moves. Matching criteria included the size of the housing development, its geographic locale, and demographics of the population served.

An outside evaluation team of researchers from Columbia University and the American Health Foundation in New York gathered qualitative and quantitative outcome data in all of the sites. The evaluators, using a standard interview protocol, polled local community leaders, housing authority administrators and residents, and school and police officials to learn the extent of problems and the effects of Boys & Girls Clubs.

The outside evaluation team examined crime statistics in each project. The evaluators also conducted observations, noting the presence of graffiti, garbage, vandalism, drug-related paraphernalia and drug dealing. Through interviews, police officers and community leaders helped to interpret the statistics and assisted evaluators in

explaining changes that occurred throughout the evaluation. In addition, housing authority managers and Boys & Girls Club directors profiled each project for the evaluators.

In line with OSAP guidelines and recommendations communicated at a technical assistance workshop, the evaluation plan for the project focused equally on process and outcome objectives. Those dual foci occurred through adoption of a logic model. With four sets of operational objectives, the logic model allowed the evaluation to proceed in a manner commensurate with the progress of the alcohol and other drug use prevention demonstration project.

The four sets of operational objectives for the logic model of evaluation are: inputs, activities, immediate outcomes, and final outcomes. Each set of objectives was addressed in the evaluation plan for the demonstration project.

Inputs

Youth in America's public housing are not only at high risk of habitual use of alcohol and other drugs, but are underserved by youth-oriented and preventive programs. For our purposes, inputs were the establishment of new Boys & Girls Clubs in public housing that had not previously been served by youth-oriented programs for the prevention of alcohol and other drug use.

By virtue of establishing, operating, and sustaining new Boys & Girls Clubs, the demonstration project built and permanently installed new services to prevent alcohol and other drug use among youth residents of public housing. Process evaluation procedures in the demonstration project document the delivery and receipt of the inputs. Outcome evaluation procedures quantify and isolate the effects and the impact of new services for at-risk youth in public housing.

Activities

In the demonstration project, activities represent the Boys & Girls Club programs. These Boys & Girls Club programs, in turn, took form through two nonexclusive and cumulative components. The two components are the core Boys & Girls Club program and the SMART Moves program to prevent alcohol and other drug use.

Each set of Boys & Girls Club activities underwent sequential evaluation within the planned process and outcome research paradigm. The products of those evaluation procedures yielded findings on the consistency and success of project activities and the efficacy of those activities on youth, family members, and significant community referents in public housing related to the prevention of alcohol and other drug use.

Immediate Outcomes

For Boys & Girls Club programs in the demonstration project, program activities that led to the prevention of alcohol and other drug use among youth in public housing were considered as immediate outcomes. These immediate outcomes occurred in two stages. Initially, youth who took part in Club programs in public housing demonstrated immediate outcomes by their rates of involvement in Club activities, continuation of involvement and attrition from program activities. Parents, other family members, and residents in public housing served by Boys & Girls Clubs showed immediate outcomes by their parallel involvement and active participation in program activities.

Later immediate outcomes of the demonstration project were evident as youth and adult participants in Club programs showed positive changes from their involvement. Manifested in such domains as educational involvement and recreational and community project activities, positive changes among participants in Boys & Girls Club programs included behaviors linked with prevention of alcohol and other drug use. Those behaviors spanned empirically documented parameters of decreased risks associated with alcohol and other drug use, and participation in alternative activities that are incompatible with alcohol and other drug use.

Final Outcomes

The new services developed and implemented in the demonstration project resulted in decreased rates of alcohol and other drug use in public housing at post-test and follow-up. Those decreased rates were the final outcome targeted in the evaluation. Follow-up rates of crack and other drug activity had increased slightly from post-test. However, ratings were still lower than they were originally.

Evaluation measurements and procedures in the demonstration study began with the project's onset. Those beginning steps resulted in the identification of comparison public housing sites and the gathering of baseline data on drug and alcohol activity.

Process Evaluation

To measure the process and outcome, Boys & Girls Clubs of America staff and a team of outside evaluators worked collaboratively within a defined structure of tasks, timelines, and procedures. This structure and its operational details were planned carefully and were the result of ongoing collaborative evaluation efforts by Boys & Girls Clubs of America staff and the team of evaluators.

Process Measures

Process evaluation activities were conducted at periodic intervals during all intervention development and implementation activities. Specifically, we employed detailed process data collection for all Boys & Girls Clubs that participated in the special OSAP program. Results of these assessment techniques provided immediate feedback and allowed corrective action while the evaluation was still in the preliminary design stage.

Process evaluation measures for the demonstration project included a total of five instruments:

Application for Unit Membership. Once a new Club meets standards for membership in Boys & Girls Clubs of America, executive staff at each new Club begun under the project completed and submitted an application for unit membership. This form yields data on the Boys & Girls Club site, facility, staff, advisory board, and target population. Other useful information gleaned from these applications included detailed descriptions of a week's activities and demographically specific data on the number, ages, and gender of youth served.

Membership Application. Every youth who takes part in Boys & Girls Club program activities, regardless of how briefly and sporadically, completes a membership application. The membership application gathers demographic information on each member, her or his family and school, and involvement in other youth-oriented programs. Data from this application assisted with process evaluation by describing the youth served by the Boys & Girls Clubs.

Semi-Annual Reports. As a requirement of the OSAP grant, every six months unit directors of Boys & Girls Clubs submit to Boys & Girls Clubs of America a detailed summary of program activities. On the semi-annual reports, Boys & Girls Club program staff record specific activities for youth, parents, and community members, noting organizational information such as contacts with other agencies, resource development, and major accomplishments.

Commitment to Quality. Boys & Girls Clubs in the study were asked to complete a **Commitment to Quality** measurement battery. This is a multidimensional battery comprised of over 30 pages. By recording progress in the **Commitment to Quality** assessment battery, executive and unit directors at Boys & Girls Clubs provided data about the quality and scope of Club programs.

Of particular interest in this process evaluation were data from the **Commitment to Quality** assessment on the daily program of Boys & Girls Clubs. Verification of information provided by executive directors and unit directors occurred through regular site visits by members of the external evaluation team.

OSAP MIF Report. Completed by local Boys & Girls Club executive directors and unit directors, this form requests semi-annual information on a range of activities, events, and service population characteristics. Illustrative of the type of material gathered through the MIF are data on training and public education activities, community contacts and linkages, demographic profiles on youth served by the program, indicators of the risk level of youth served, staffing patterns for the facility, activities specific to the demonstration grant, products and materials developed in the program, and outcome

evaluation parameters on youth, their families and program staff. The MIF assisted in verifying outcome data collected in the project.

Quality Control

Despite the five types of data gathered to document the establishment and operation of Boys & Girls Clubs programs in public housing, additional verification was necessary to definitively conclude that plans for developing Club programs were carried out as intended. That verification came from observations of Club program activities by the external evaluation team.

Through observations, members of the external evaluation team determined the correspondence between program development plans and program operations. Moreover, records made by members of the external evaluation team strengthen conclusions about the integrity and internal consistency of Boys & Girls Clubs programs across all sites scheduled for new Clubs as part of the demonstration project. Additional process data collection was made through program observation.

With permission from Club staff, members of the external evaluation team periodically observed activities across participating project sites. The evaluators recorded Club staff adherence to programmatic protocol, whether youth were engaged in program activities, and the numbers and demographic profiles of youth involved in specific program activities.

Research Design

The overall objective of the demonstration study was to compare alcohol and other drug use and other problem behavior rates among youth who live in public housing and who do and do not have access to Boys & Girls Clubs. Specifically, we were also interested in the effects of Boys & Girls Clubs with the SMART Moves prevention program on public housing youth rates of alcohol and other drug use and related problems. We were also interested in the overall impact the Boys & Girls Clubs might have on the public housing environment, manifested in such areas as rates of criminal activity, drug dealing, vandalism, and parent involvement.

These objectives guided our research design and data collection activities. Each objective was focused on youth who are eligible for Boys & Girls Club activities (that invariably include females and males) and who reside in public housing (as defined by local government subsidized housing.)

The design for the research thus involved three sets of public housing sites. As shown in the following chart, one set of five sites involved public housing with newly established Boys & Girls Clubs and the SMART Moves prevention program, another set of five sites involved public housing sites served by traditional Boys & Girls Clubs, and the third set of five sites involved public housing sites without Boys & Girls Clubs.

Research Design

Public Housing Sites	Measurement Occasions and Interventions
Five sites	O_1 X_{BC} O_2 X_{BC} O_3 X_{BC} O_4 X_{BC} O_5 X_{BC} O_6
Five sites	O_1 X_{BC+} O_2 X_{BC+} O_3 X_{BC+} O_4 X_{BC+} O_5 X_{BC+} O_6
Five sites	O_1 O_2 O_3 O_4 O_5 O_6

Key:
Each site represents a complete housing development in one city, with 15 separate sites and cities in total for the design.

O = Observation occasion; subscript indicates timing of observation.

X_{BC} = Regular Boys & Girls Club program.

X_{BC+} = Boys & Girls Club program plus SMART Moves alcohol and other drug prevention program.

This evaluation research design offered several distinct advantages. By including three types of public housing sites, we were able to concurrently compare the effects of a regular Boys & Girls Club program against effects of an enhanced program with the SMART Moves component, both relative to the effects of a control condition containing sites where no Boys & Girls Club presently exists.

Outcome Evaluation

Outcome evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the program in producing change in specific variables which are measured in the study population. For the purposes of alcohol and other drug use prevention, these variables of interest are typically defined as more proximal or intermediate objectives. Such objectives, in turn, encompass changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior—given that these objectives are more specifically addressed by the program. In our study, outcome evaluation consisted of collecting data from program participants at baseline and then repeating these measurements following program implementation. The same measurements were administered for control participants.

Outcome evaluation is the most important type of summative evaluation for our purposes. Measurement of the degree to which preventive intervention and competence

promoting programs, such as those implemented by Boys & Girls Clubs, have an effect on broader or more distal goals is referred to as impact evaluation. These effects, including actual changes in alcohol and other drug dependence and chemical addiction morbidity and mortality, as well as more proximal changes such as knowledge, attitudes, and behavior that were initially unintended, may not actually be observable or measurable in the short-term or until long after intervention has been implemented.

Within the outcome evaluation design, several measurement procedures were administered to gather data on alcohol and other drug use, and on resiliency factors among youth in the target age groups at all public housing sites in the sample. Since this is a comparative study of the overall well-being of indexed sites with and without Boys & Girls Clubs, the costs and complications of defining and polling this highly transient and hard-to-track population were not justified. The evaluators assumed that assessments of the housing authority staff and residents, the staff of Boys & Girls Clubs, and the local police officers would, in combination, yield a close estimate of the drug activity and alcohol and other drug use among youth in the indexed sites.

Across conditions and cohorts, members of the outside evaluation team visited every public housing site. During these visits, the team carried out several measurement procedures. All procedures were prefaced by obtaining approval from housing authority administrators and tenant groups.

Informal support networks data come from semistructured questionnaires. Adult surveys involved a random sample of 33% of all housing units in a development. Surveys were delivered to a random sample of each indexed neighborhood. Adult surveys gathered data on perceptions of Boys & Girls Clubs, the level of delinquency problems and the types of needs that should be addressed through the Club. The semistructured survey allowed respondents to remain anonymous, increasing candor and accuracy.

Observed External Supports. Gathered by research assistants blind to condition assignments, external support data came from public housing sites and surrounding neighborhoods, schools, and communities. In these settings, research assistants recorded evidence of tangible, structural, and institutional supports to encourage healthy and alternative recreations among young people, thus preventing alcohol and other drug use among them. Tangible supports for purposes of data collection included posters, signs, and literature on alcohol and other drug use prevention.

Structural supports included social and physical health recreation, youth groups and clubs, and health-promoting alternative community events. Institutional supports included school, church, and social agency programs to prevent alcohol and other drug use. Varying among settings, evidence of the three types of external supports provided mean scores by study condition. Research assistants showed within- and among-rater reliability of .81 and .77 with the observed external supports scale.

Unobtrusive Measures. Added data gathering occurred through principally unobtrusive means. These means of data collection are assumed to have fewer biases than self report. Notwithstanding such faith in the data, by having access to and collecting confirmatory findings on alcohol and other drug use and related behavior, and prosocial activities among youth in public housing sites, the evaluators scientifically examined the validity of outcome measurement results. The following sources and parameters provided unobtrusive measures of demonstration study outcomes.

Crime statistics. Members of the evaluation team gathered juvenile and adult crime statistics from local police and housing authorities at each site for the study. An effort was made to collect only those statistics for the targeted project.

Observations. The evaluation team also noted the percentage of graffiti, garbage, and vandalism within each public housing site. Any presence of drug paraphernalia and drug dealing was documented during these observations.

Results

For each set of data reported on the following figures, a brief explanation is provided on results documenting the implementation, effects, and impact of Boys & Girls Clubs in public housing. Warranting mention are caveats that must accompany interpretations of these data. Figures 3 and 4 are based on estimates by police officials, community leaders and Boys & Girls Club staff, and may contain biases inherent in self-report. Although sites were matched on structural criteria, the evaluation did not allow perfect matches between Club and control sites. Data presented in this report are not definitive but are certainly suggestive of the effects of Boys & Girls Clubs on youth in public housing.

Data Sources and Scale Construction

Data graphed on Figures 1 through 6 in this report are based on measurements gathered at each targeted site by the evaluation team. These measurements draw from reports by police officers, housing authority administrators and residents, school principals, and Boys & Girls Club staff. The figures contain compiled data that were averaged and charted on one of three scales.

Figures 1,3,4, and 5 are tabulated in scales of 10 and 5 points each. On these scales, higher numbers indicate higher levels of intensity of the index measured variable. Figure 6 is tabulated on a scale that represents arithmetic percentages. Figure 2 is scored on a criterion scale.

Quantitative Findings

In the figures, the following abbreviations represent the three types of sites: New Clubs=public housing sites with newly established Boys & Girls Clubs plus SMART Moves comprehensive prevention programming; Old Clubs = public housing sites with existing Boys & Girls Clubs that often include elements of alcohol and other drug use prevention programming; and Control = public housing sites with no Boys & Girls Club unit or programs.

Figure 1: Availability of Organized Sports in Public Housing. Figure 1 illustrates on a scale of 1 to 10 the lack of organized sports in the control sites, or public housing without Boys & Girls Clubs, in contrast to public housing with New Clubs and Old Clubs. Public housing sites without Boys & Girls Clubs had no tennis, track, or swimming at pre-test, post-test or follow-up. Similar to the control sites at pre-test, New Clubs were practically without organized sports programs. However, at post-test New Clubs had climbed 6 points.

At follow-up, both New Clubs and Old Clubs had reached 9, indicating a high level for many organized sports in their public housing site. In contrast, control sites rose only one point from pre-test to post-test and remained constant at follow-up. The great availability of organized sports in public housing with Boys & Girls Clubs is significant

because of the implications sports have for teaching discipline, team work, and improving self-esteem.[1,2]

Figure 2: Presence of Recreational Facilities Staffed By Professionals in Public Housing. Figure 2 records the presence of professionally staffed recreational facilities in the Boys & Girls Club sites and in the control sites. At pre-test, post-test, and follow-up, only one such facility existed in the control sites. New Club sites had no such facilities at pre-test (though four had recreational facilities without professional staff.) By post-test, all New Club sites and Old Club sites had recreational facilities staffed by professionals in place.

Figure 3: Crack Presence in Public Housing. Reported in Figure 3 is the presence of crack cocaine in the three types of sites rated on a 10-point scale. At pre-test, New Club sites and control sites were the same (5.75). By post-test, crack in New Club sites had dropped almost one point (4.9). In contrast, crack in control sites had risen more than one point (6.2), and in Old Club sites had risen one-quarter of a point, from 4.5 to 4.75. At follow-up, all three sites witnessed an increase in the presence of crack cocaine. However, New Club sites rose less rapidly (4.9 to 5.3) than control and Old Club sites (6.2 to 7; 4.75 to 5.5). Given the alarming increase in crack use nationwide and especially in public housing, any decrease in crack use at all is significant.

Figure 4: Estimated Rates of Drug Activity in Public Housing. Compiled in Figure 4 are assessments made by Boys & Girls Club staff members, police officers, and housing authority executives and residents of drug activity in public housing sites on a 10-point scale. Figure 4 shows that drug activity is higher in control sites, sites without Boys & Girls Clubs, than in projects with New Clubs and Old Clubs. Still, drug activity, similar to the presence of crack cocaine, has increased in all sites. Also similar to Figure 3, scores for New Clubs from pre-test to post-test were dramatically lower (6.75 to 5.8) but rose again slightly by follow-up. Scores for Old Clubs were slightly lower than controls and New Club sites at pre-test (6.25), but higher at post-test (6.75) and higher still at follow-up (6.8). Control sites were almost identical to New Club sites at pre-test (6.6) but by post-test and follow-up, scores had risen to 7.5 and 8.5 respectively.

Figure 5: Parental Involvement in Public Housing. Figure 5 compares parental involvement in the three different sites on a 10-point rating scale. Parental involvement is highest in the Old Club sites (3.6). Parental involvement in the new Club sites increased steadily, from

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[1]**Richardson, J. L., Dwyer, K., McGuigan, K, et. al (1989). use among eighth-grade students who take care of themselves after school.** ***Pediatrics, 84:3,*** 556-565.

[2]**Barth, R. (1988).** ***Social and cognitive treatment of children and adolescents.*** San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

1.55 at pre-test to 2.67 by follow-up. However, control sites parental involvement stayed low, from 1.5 at pre-test to 1.6 at follow-up. Figure 5 illustrates that Boys & Girls Club staff encourage parents to volunteer for and participate in Club activities. Also, Boys & Girls Club staff work with the schools, motivating parents to respond to student evaluations and conferences. Yet, despite the increase since pre-test for parental involvement in New Club and Old Club sites, Club staff are committed to further increasing the overall low level of parental involvement.

Figure 6: Damaged Units in Public Housing. Figure 6 compares the percentages of damaged units among the three types of sites. By follow-up, the percentage of damaged units was higher in the control sites without Boys & Girls Clubs (9%) than in the sites with New Clubs (6%) and Old Clubs (4%). The lowest rates of damaged units were in sites with Old Clubs.

Juvenile Criminal Activity

Besides the findings categorized by the three types of research conditions within the study's evaluation design, comparable data were obtained on overall crime statistics at initial and final measurements from two cities. These cities are Jacksonville, Florida, and Houston, Texas. Police departments in Jacksonville and Houston alone were able to provide us with sufficiently reliable data on two public housing sites in each city for us to draw conclusive findings about a change in levels of overall juvenile criminal activity within and between sites that had Boys & Girls Clubs within public housing and sites that did not have Clubs within public housing.

Findings from Jacksonville and Houston allow us to confidently state the following conclusion: At final follow-up, the percentage decrease between public housing sites with Boys & Girls Clubs relative to sites without Clubs for criminal activity related to juveniles was 13%. This statistic means that 13% fewer police reports were filed in beats that covered public housing sites with Boys & Girls Clubs compared to beats that covered public housing sites that did not have Boys & Girls Clubs.

If true for other sites covered by the evaluation design, a 13% overall reduction in levels of juvenile crime implies that many fewer youth in public housing sites served by Boys & Girls Clubs were arrested or apprehended by the police for criminal activity, relative to youths in public housing sites not served by Clubs. For example, assuming a base of 4,000 youth in all sites that were part of the study, the numbers of arrests decreased by approximately 100.

This estimate of 100 fewer arrests is derived from reports of an average of 80 juvenile arrests per year, per public housing site, prior to establishment of a Boys & Girls Club and 70 juvenile arrests per year, per site, after establishment of a Club. The difference between 80 and 70 is -12.5% or, by rounding upward, -13%. Thus, with 10 public housing sites in the conditions of the study that had a Boys & Girls Club, the average decrease per site was 10 youth. In sum, besides the statistical significance of findings from this study, the social or substantive significance of 10 fewer arrests of juveniles per public housing site because of a Club's positive influence is impressive.

Specific Reductions in Criminal Activity

Specific comparisons of criminal activity within public housing sites are valid and applicable to all geographic areas and sites in the present evaluation. In line with our other comparisons among the three types of sites—those with an existing Club, those with a new Club, and those without any Club—we analyzed the data for specific areas of criminal activity related to drugs.

The two specific areas of criminal activity related to drugs are the presence of crack in public housing and the extent of drug activity in public housing. Our conclusions about these two areas of criminal activity regarding effects of a Boys & Girls Club are based on the aggregated effects of a Club across both types of comparison sites, and are as follows.

- Levels of the presence of crack did not differ significantly between sites that had a new Club and that did not have a Boys & Girls Club at the time of initial (pre-test) measurement. But, levels of the presence of crack differed significantly ($p < .05$) between sites that had an existing Club, sites that had a new Club and sites that had no Club. These differences were in favor of lower rates of crack presence in sites that had existing Clubs relative to the other two types of sites. The presence of crack was measured through visible crack paraphernalia, police records, and assessments by police, housing authority staff, tenants, Boys & Girls Club staff, and other community figures.

- At the time of final follow-up assessment measurement (24 months after initial pretest measurement), rates of drug activity and crack presence each differed significantly ($p < .01$) in favor of sites that had Boys & Girls Clubs within public housing as compared to sites that did not have Clubs within public housing.

- At final follow-up, drug activity within public housing was 22% lower in sites that were served by a Boys & Girls Club when compared with sites not served by a Boys & Girls Club.

- At final follow-up, the presence of crack within public housing was 25% lower in sites served by a Boys & Girls Club when compared with sites that were not served by a Boys & Girls Club. Due to different levels of crack presence at pre-test between sites with existing Clubs and those either with new Clubs or with no Clubs, this finding indicates that crack use remained low in public housing sites served by existing Clubs and that crack use was reduced in public housing sites served by new Boys & Girls Clubs.

School Data

During the later phases of the study, school data were analyzed to assess the impact of Boys & Girls Clubs on members' school performance. The data collection team visited elementary, middle, and junior high schools that enroll youth who reside in publicly subsidized housing. Through interviews with school officials and reviews of school records, estimates were available on selected parameters of school performance for youth in public housing sites with and without Clubs. Beyond the presence or absence of a Boys & Girls Club, sites in the comparison were similar. That similarity included numbers of youth residents, sociodemographic characteristics, and family composition and background features.

The following types of information were collected from schools serving the indexed sites: truancy, academic failure, behavioral problems, and repeated grades. Truancy defines the extent to which youth missed school on a regular school day. Academic failure shows the rate of youth who received failing grades in required classes or course areas. Behavior problems cover such nonacademic areas as acting out, fighting, stealing, alcohol and other drug use, and school rule violations. Repeated grades represent the percentage of youth who were held back grades and who were required to retake the same grade level.

Because of the small sample of districts and public housing facilities for which school statistics were available, the findings are necessarily tentative. Moreover, school data are vulnerable to biases inherent in self-reports and faulty record systems. Finally, the evaluation did not allow perfect matches among public housing residents, Boys & Girls Club members, and enrolled school students.

Although the school data are too preliminary to appear in the body of this report, they are suggestive of the potential impact of Boys & Girls Clubs on school performance. Evidence for the positive environmental effects of Boys & Girls Clubs is suggested by lower percentages of school academic failure, repeated grades and behavior problems in schools serving public housing sites that have Clubs, relative to schools that serve public housing sites without Clubs.

Perhaps the Boys & Girls Club staff commitment to monitoring their members' attendance and grades contributed to the differences in these preliminary reports of school performance. Nearly all Club unit directors in the study made efforts to meet the teachers of their members. Further study is warranted to assess the impact of Boys & Girls Clubs on members' school performance.

Conclusions

Based on analyses of data collected from public housing sites that have newly established Boys & Girls Clubs, existing Boys & Girls Clubs or no Clubs, several conclusions from the longitudinal study are empirically warranted. Foremost among those conclusions is that Boys & Girls Clubs exert a positive and palpable influence on the human and physical environment of the indexed public housing sites.

For youth who live in public housing and have access to a Boys & Girls Club, that influence is manifest in their involvement in healthy and constructive educational, social, and recreational activities. Also relative to their counterparts without access to a Club, these youth are less involved in unhealthy, deviant, and dangerous activities.

Data from the evaluation show that adult residents of these neighborhoods are also beneficially affected by Boys & Girls Clubs. Compared with parents in public housing sites that do not have Club programs and facilities, adult family members in communities with Boys & Girls Clubs are more involved in youth-oriented activities and school programs.

For adults and youth alike, Boys & Girls Clubs appear to be associated with an overall reduction in alcohol and other drug use, drug trafficking, and other drug-related criminal activity. The presence of crack cocaine is lowest in public housing sites with Boys & Girls Clubs with SMART Moves prevention programs. The ratings of drug dealing activity are

also the lowest in those sites served by Boys & Girls Clubs with the SMART Moves prevention program.

Organized sports, a key element of Boys & Girls Clubs, prevail in neighborhoods that contain Clubs. Such supports for youth in communities without Boys & Girls Clubs are relatively rare. When a facility does exist for youth in communities without Boys & Girls Clubs, it is usually not staffed by professionals or other trained personnel. These unregulated facilities are susceptible to drug dealing and other illicit activities. In contrast, the Boys & Girls Club staff are committed to enriching their Club members' physical, emotional, social, educational, vocational and recreational well-being. Most significantly, participation in organized sports and other extracurricular activities has been linked to decreased use of alcohol and other drugs.[3]

Quantitative and qualitative evaluation results to date show that public housing sites with Boys & Girls Clubs, with and without SMART Moves, have a lower degree of evident drug activity and alcohol and other drug use than sites without Clubs. Boys & Girls Club programs thus appear to improve the physical quality of life in public housing. This seems to have boosted the morale of authority figures in the community.

Through interviews, members of the evaluation team discovered that the presence of Boys & Girls Clubs in public housing encourages residents to organize and improve their community. The Clubs stimulate communication between public housing residents, the police, housing authority managing personnel and other community groups. The increase in communication seems to have enriched the social quality of life in public housing. This informal interaction and communication is perhaps the most important effect of the Boys & Girls Clubs and it is also the most difficult to measure.

On a qualitative and intuitive level the researchers find dramatic differences between public housing sites with Boys & Girls Clubs and those without Clubs. These indicators of the potential of Boys & Girls Clubs merit further funding and further research.

Social support services are critical for youth in public housing. Yet comprehensive and sensitive services for young people in public housing are practically nonexistent. These public housing communities are the ones which most urgently need the kind of attention, community organization, and carefully designed intervention programs that Boys & Girls Clubs offer.

Although the long term impact of Boys & Girls Clubs in public housing is yet to be seen, our evaluation reveals a Club's positive influence. Public and private agencies which provide and/or support prevention efforts urgently need the kind of cost-effective strategy that Clubs provide in order to prevent alcohol and other drug use and maladaptive behaviors before they become too costly to treat.

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[3]Richardson et al., *ibid*.

Evaluation Team

The evaluation team for the demonstration study represented a joint product of Boys & Girls Clubs of America and scientific investigators affiliated with two research organizations. Affiliated with the American Health Foundation of New York and Columbia University, the evaluation team is comprised of Mario Orlandi and Steven Schinke. The outside evaluators have a long history of work together on community based intervention programs aimed at abuse prevention among youth.

Steven Schinke, Ph.D., received his doctoral degree in social welfare from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1975. He joined the faculty at Columbia University in 1986 and is currently a Professor in the School of Social Work. His research interests center on prevention training, with a special focus on abuse and minority culture adolescents.

Mario Orlandi, M.P.H., Ph.D., was trained in neurobiology, psychology, and public health at Duke University and at Harvard University. Orlandi is Chief of the Division of Health Promotion Research at the American Health Foundation and is a Senior Research Associate at Columbia University School of Social Work. Orlandi also holds appointments at the Bowman-Gray School of Medicine in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. Orlandi has scientific expertise in skills development intervention research with youth at risk for health behavior problems.

Schinke and Orlandi were assisted in the evaluation by Kristin Cole. Cole has a B.S. from Northwestern University and expects to receive the M.S.W. from Columbia University School of Social Work in 1992. Over the past three years, Cole has worked closely with Schinke and Orlandi on evaluation phases of community based intervention studies aimed at the prevention of alcohol and other drug use among children and youth.

FIGURE 1: Organized Sports in Public Housing (10-point rating scale)

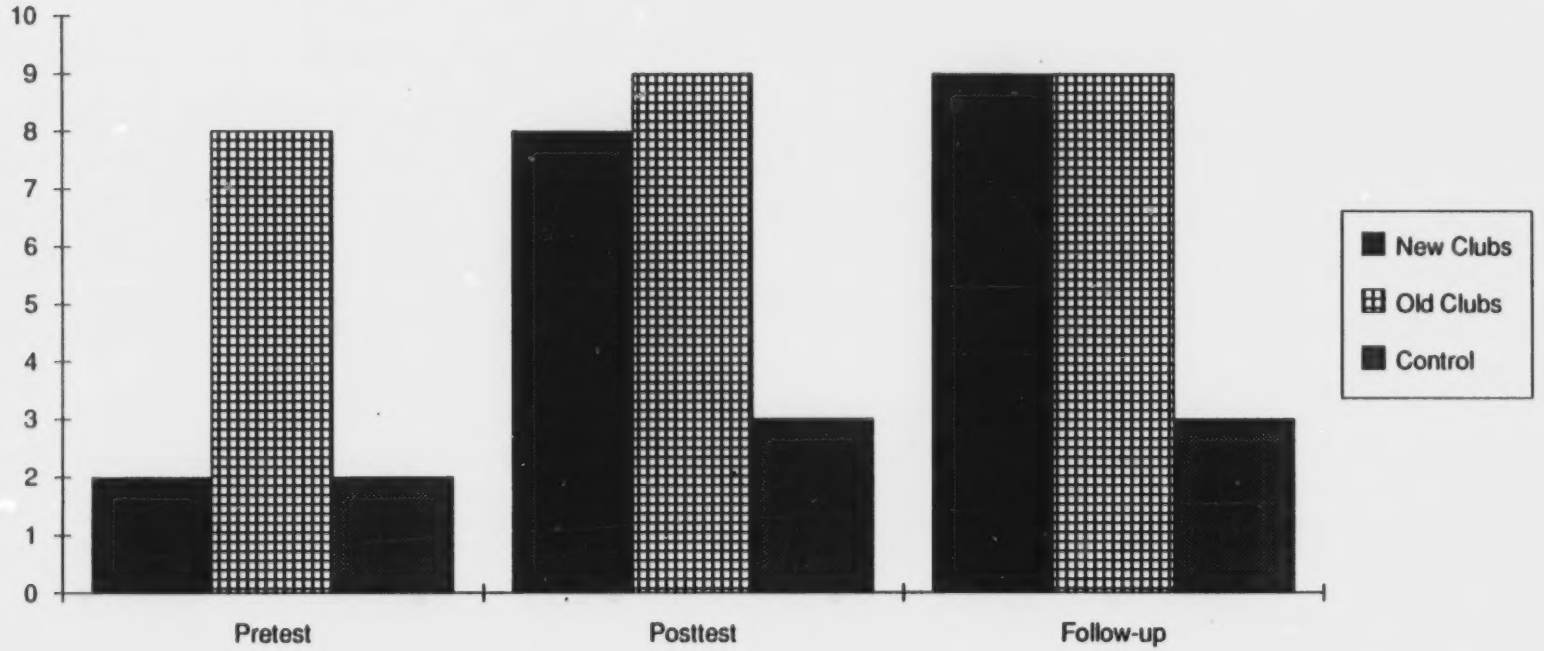

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FIGURE 2: Recreational Facilities staffed by Professionals in Public Housing (criterion scale)

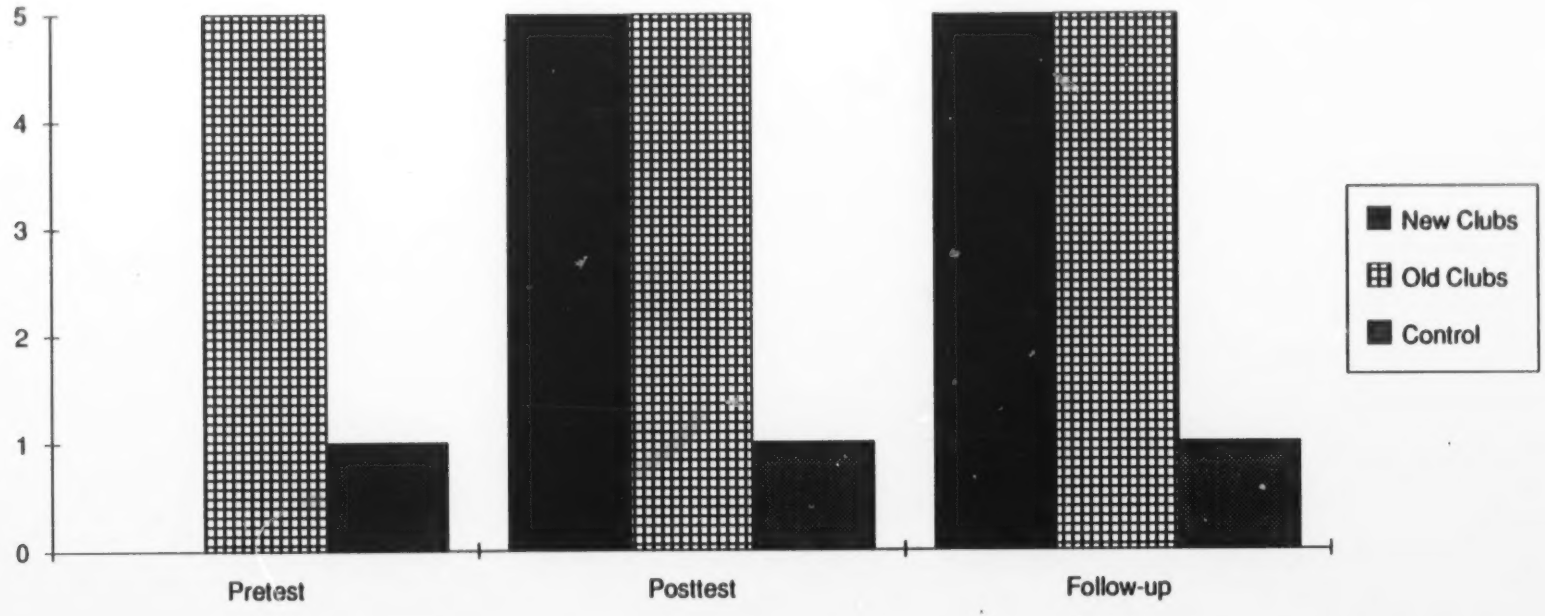

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FIGURE 3: Crack Presence in Public Housing (10-point rating scale)

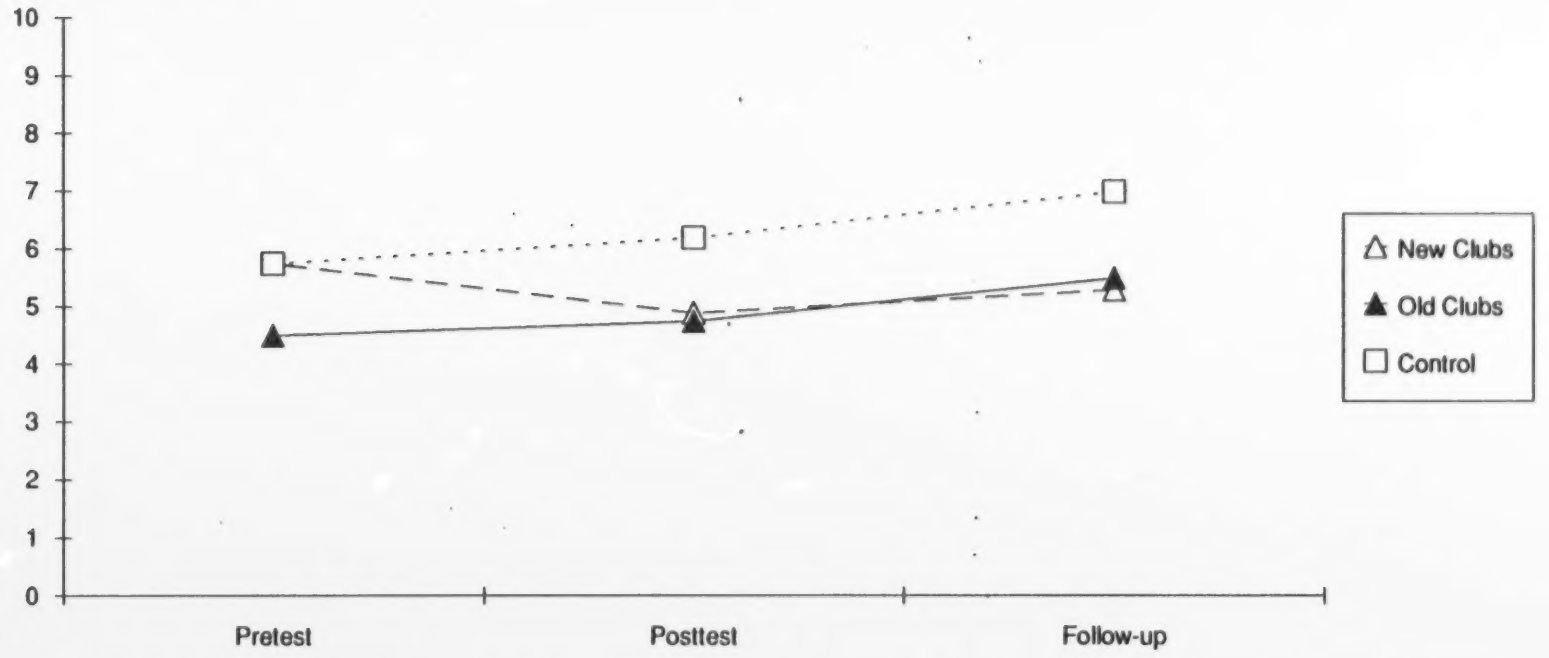

FIGURE 4: Drug Activity in Public Housing (10-point rating scale)

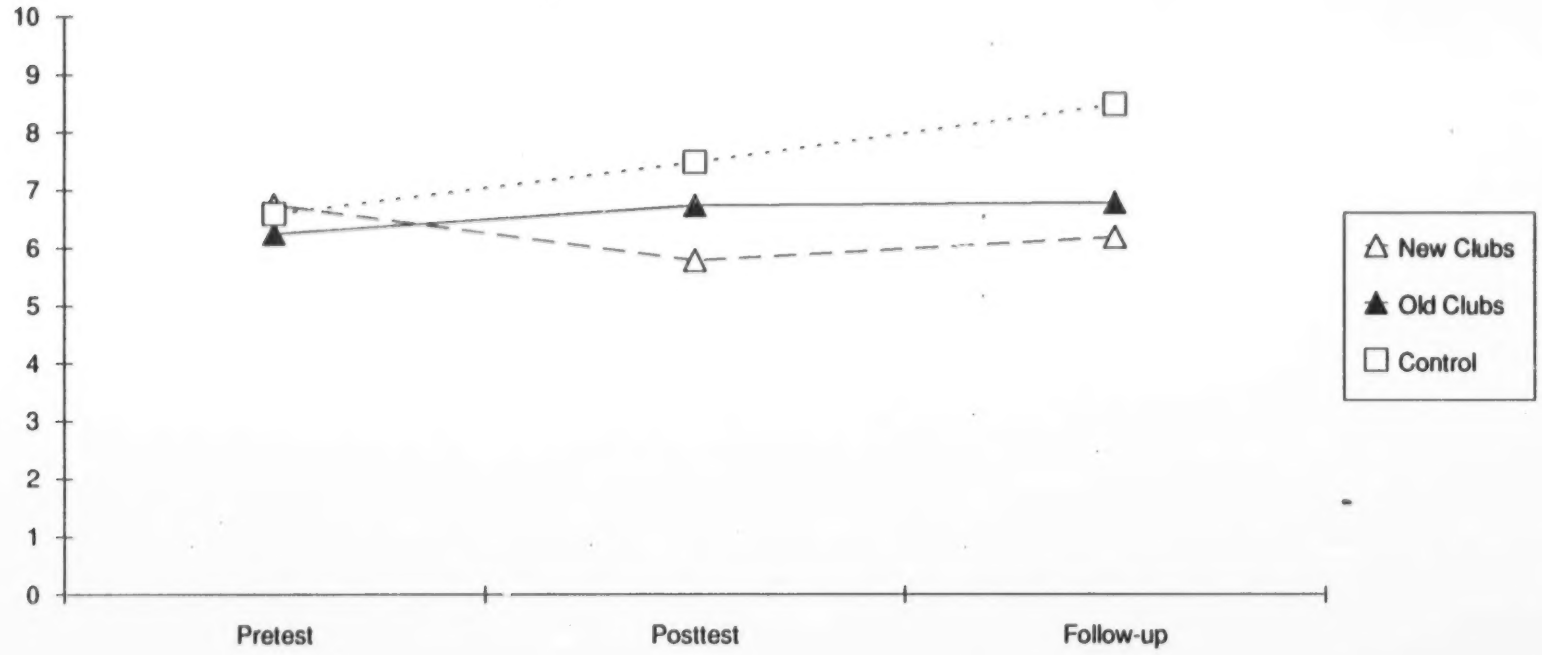

FIGURE 5: Parental Involvement in Public Housing (5-point rating scale)

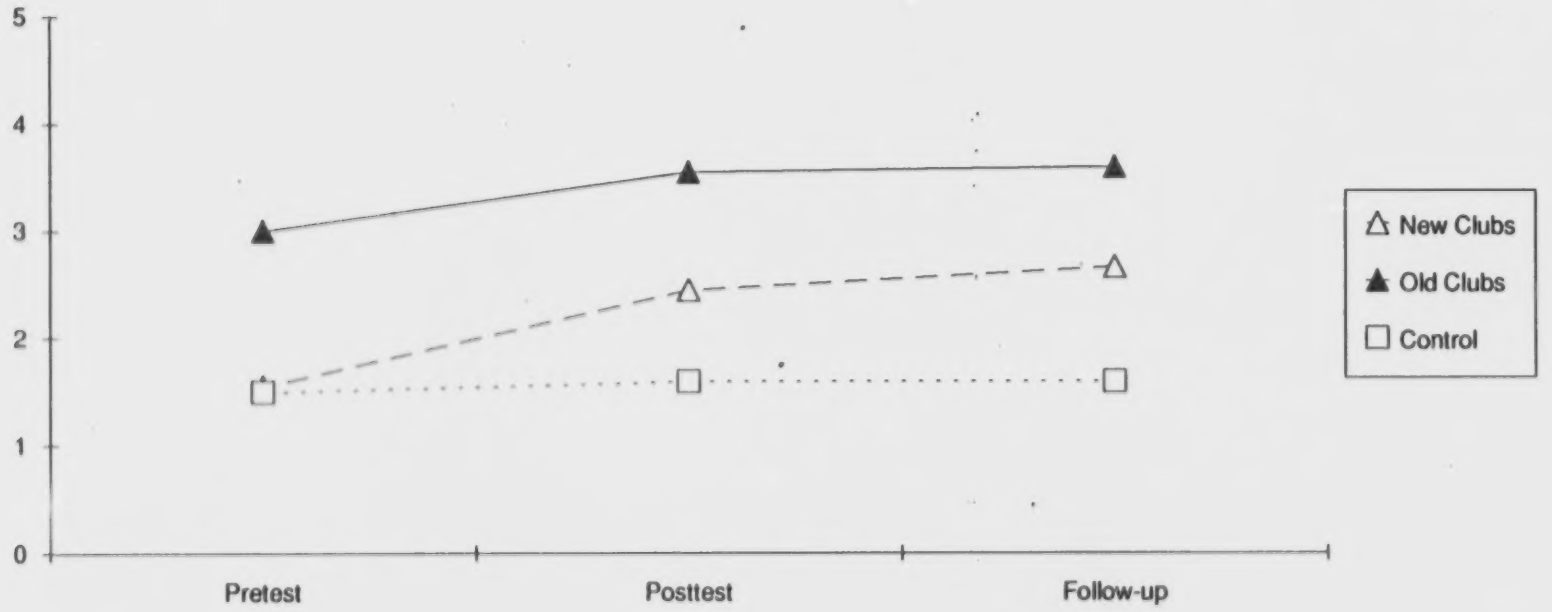

FIGURE 6: Damaged Units in Public Housing (percentages)